City Hall staff removes phallic prank

PrideFest organizers deny involvement

By ED SEALOVER
THE GAZETTE

Colorado Springs has a number of statues approved for display on public property, ranging from Humpty Dumpty to free-form abstract shapes.

The one in front of City Hall Tuesday was not one of them.

Two people jumped out of a car around 8 a.m. and placed an 8-foot-tall papier-mache penis on the corner of Kiowa Street and Nevada Avenue before speeding off. A few minutes later, Assistant City Manager Mike Anderson and public communications worker Tim Burke placed it into a trash bin beside City Auditorium.

Officials don't know the identity of the pranksters and are not making serious efforts to find them because the phallus did not damage the public right of way, Anderson said.

The stunt came just 16 hours after Mayor Lionel Rivera informed the Pikes Peak Gay and Lesbian Center he would not issue a proclamation for the forthcoming gay-pride festival. But he does not assume the two events are connected.

Ryan Acker, advocacy adviser for the center, also said that despite rumors, his group had no involvement. But he laughed heartily when told about the statue Wednesday.

"It definitely was not a coordinated action, but if it was, I wish somebody had let me in on it," Acker said.

Security guards spotted the brown and pink sculpture as city workers began to file into their offices. The employees took note, too.

"There were a lot of questions being asked about it and whether it was something approved by the Arts Commission," Anderson said.

Rivera, who typically issues proclamations for festivals held in the city, declined to do so for PrideFest for the second year in a row. The event, which includes a wedding ceremony in Acacia Park, is used to promote same-sex marriages, and the majority of the council doesn't support that, he said.

Acker said he was disappointed, especially after city leaders had denounced anti-gay pickets who traveled from Kansas earlier this year. The July 17 event will go on without the city's blessing, he said.

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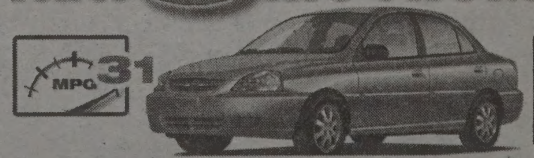

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